

LET'S STOP QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY



October 2020

Inside this edition:

- Spring activity
- Help stop the spread
- Garden tasks for home gardeners
- Sterile insect drop continues
- Crop loss provides opportunity for increased numbers
- Fruit to look out for

Spring activity

Trapping rates across the Goulburn Murray Valley have continued their seasonal upward trend, marking the start of the new Queensland Fruit Fly (Qfly) season.

It is typical for spring peaks to emerge as flies that survived the winter, wake from their slow-moving mode and start to mobilise in search of protein, other fruit fly to mate with and fruit to lay their eggs into. Once mating has occurred, females lay eggs in early season fruit one to three days later and these adults then die out and it is their offspring that become the problem.

The number of Qfly trapped in early November typically drops as by this time adult flies have died out – leaving their young, the first generation of the new fruit fly season in fruit as eggs and larvae or in the soil as pupae.



Help stop the spread

Control activities undertaken in urban locations by home gardeners will assist our growers in their production. If Qfly in built up urban and peri-urban locations are controlled then their spread to rural locations will be reduced. The efforts of home gardeners to control fruit fly in spring 2020 will be of immense use to commercial growers and the entire community in the upcoming season throughout summer and into autumn.

If vigilance is not maintained, and fruit fly control measures undertaken in early spring, flies that have survived the winter will find host fruit resulting in population explosions in December 2020 and January 2021.



Garden tasks for home gardeners

It is essential that home gardeners monitor for fruit flies in spring through trapping and fruit examination. Should fruit fly be identified, let your neighbours know, so they too can be on the look out and take necessary action.

No one action will control fruit fly, a combination of measures must be used to effectively control and prevent the spread of the pest. Control and prevention measures include:

- bait sprays - to attract and kill fruit flies
- netting - stops Qfly from reaching fruit through netting, bags or sleeves
- pruning trees to a manageable height
- pick ripened fruit
- check ripening fruit and vegetables skin for sting marks
- pick up and correctly dispose of fallen fruit
- removal of unwanted host plants and trees



Sterile insect drop continues

The release of sterile Qfly over Cobram recommenced for the 2020/21 fruit fly season in September as part of a national Hort Innovation project. The pilot research program will continue to see weekly releases of about 2 million sterile fruit flies dropped from a locally owned aircraft over the Cobram township every week until April 2021.

The Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) is a method of pest control using the area-wide release of sterile insects to reduce reproduction in a wild-population of the same species.

The release of sterile flies over Cobram aims to suppress an urban population to prevent it moving out into the surrounding horticulture. The program has contributed to a reduction of 83% in Qfly activity in Cobram.



Crop loss provides an opportunity for increased numbers

Severe hail storms in some areas of the Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) in the last week of September significantly impacted many growers across the region. Crop losses caused from these weather events may mean increased Qfly numbers in commercial growing areas this spring, if destroyed fruit is not picked or stripped from trees, mulched or disposed of in an approved manner. Elimination of potential breeding grounds is essential to stop the spread of the pest, with inspection recommended to ensure that habitats that allows for fruit fly population growth are identified and correctly managed.

Fruit to look out for

Growers and home gardeners should be on the look-out for early ripening fruit such as loquats and mulberries, or late-hanging fruit such as navel oranges and persimmons. These fruit will be targeted by fruit flies during the spring peak and should be removed from trees as they ripen and not left to rot on the tree or ground.

DID YOU KNOW?

The new fruit fly season typically begins when temperatures reach between 13-15°C.



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